Memorial Day

May 30, 1919

GEORGE G. MEADE POST No. 1

GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC

ADDRESS

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Another Memorial Day has come! —the day on which you do honor to the memory of your departed comrades—the day on which your countrymen recall the fact that you once saved the Republic. Few are left. The ranks grow thinner year by year and the veneration felt for those who survive grows more profound with the flight of time.

From Bull Run to Gettysburg there was hard, stubborn fighting and grievous suffering and death. Your struggles were not always crowned with victory, but the battle of Gettysburg, fought on Pennsylvania soil, was the death blow to the Confederate cause. Had your line wavered and broken on that memorable 3d of July, 1863, there

might have been a different conclusion of the war of the Rebellion. Foreign nations were carefully watching the course of events in the struggle between the States, and had the result at Gettysburg been different, it might have led to the recognition of the Confederacy by foreign powers and today, instead of a united, we might have a divided country, made up of several small nations.

The war in which you bore a gallant part was not a small and unimportant conflict. The terrible strife which came to an end on the eleventh day of November last involved so many races and peoples that it is called a world war, and it overshadows, in the minds of many Americans, the conflict of 1861-1865. But, as a recent authority has said, if "we count the casualties, the number of men in the armies, the percentage of the population drawn into the military and naval forces of the nation, we are confronted by the fact that the War of the Rebellion still remains the great military effort of the United States. . . . During the world war the United States put under arms

about 4,000,000 men. Up to date (January 21, 1919) the number of dead—killed in action and died of wounds and disease—totals 63,796. Against this stands the death list in the Civil War of the North alone, 359,528. This does not include the number of those who were discharged from the army and died at home from the result of wounds, of exposure, or disease contracted in the line of duty. The historians of the Civil War estimate the death roll of the North to have been 500,000, and the toll the war took of the South cannot have been much under that of the North. The Civil War takes on a new and solemn meaning when we place its death list of half a million side by side with the death list of 63,796 for our army in the world war." *

The history of the Civil War is a story of courage and self-sacrifice that cannot be surpassed, and well may you be proud of duty done in that great crisis. Your country remembers with pride and admiration its defenders and has established a Memorial Day upon which, in all the years to come, expres-

* Clarence Edward Macartney.

sion shall be given to its feelings of love, honor and gratitude.

The passions that contended during the Civil War have passed away under the mellowing influence of time, better acquaintance, broader knowledge and keener comprehension of the destiny of this Republic. None can doubt that our country is being more firmly welded together day by day and year by year, and that the men of the South and the men of the North are evincing a more considerate regard for and a warmer appreciation of one another's interests.

Forgetting not the men of other States who fought upon the various battlefields of the Civil War, we recall with pride that of all the places made historic and immortal by heroic deeds there is none toward which the patriot turns with greater reverence or interest than Gettysburg. Here it was that the flower of the North and South met in battle array; here it was that the wave of rebellion broke and fell before the stern and unyielding bravery of the Army of the Potomac and receded, never to return; here is found the story of courage, of bravery and of fortitude,

the like of which will ever remain unequaled. We recall with pride, also, the remarkable fact that in this decisive hour of the conflict, Pennsylvania not only had a larger number of soldiers in the Army of the Potomac than any other State, but the genius of her sons shone resplendent in leadership. Meade, after whom your post is named, Reynolds, Hancock, Gregg, Pleasonton, Birney, Geary, Crawford and Humphreys were grandly conspicuous among those who led that army to victory. Upon the field of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania has erected an imposing production of the sculptor's art as a perpetual memorial to the memory of her warrior sons, and with a mind thoughtful and a heart appreciative of what was wrought there in her own interest and in the interest of her sister States, she forgot none of her sons who served her in the hour of danger. Around and about the base of that magnificent tribute, in letters of enduring bronze which will proclaim the story of bravery and of suffering to the utmost limit of time, is to be found the name of every soldier belonging to Pennsylvania regiments

and commands, whether officer or private, whether living or dead, who was there in defense of his country. The Commission appointed to erect the memorial numbered among its members three comrades of Meade Post—General St. Clair A. Mulholland, General H. S. Huidekoper, both whom have answered their last roll-call, and George P. Morgan. Huidekoper lost an arm at Gettysburg. Morgan was severely wounded at the battle of Cedar Creek, July 19, 1864. I do not believe Morgan has passed a day since he was wounded that he has not suffered pain by reason of it.

On September 27, 1910, the Governor of the State of Pennsylvania accepted from the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Commission that monument as an enduring evidence of a people's regard, which, for all time, will be known as "Pennsylvania's Memorial," placed in honor of the soldiers of Pennsylvania who served their country at Gettysburg, and which will always remain an inspiration to succeeding generations and remind them of the deeds that made that battlefield immortal;

reminding us also that to those who fought there and to those who stood the test of other fields of conflict we are indebted for the preservation of the freest and best Republic the world has ever seen.

Had it not been for the victories you won in the War of Rebellion, which was brought to an end by the surrender at Appomattox, there would have been no united nation on this side of the Atlantic to furnish the sinews of war at the critical moment to rescue civilization from the onslaught of the Hun. No rising sun on Easter morn ever seemed to me so radiant with joy and glory as the sun I saw upon the horizon as I looked from my window on the morning of the eleventh day of November last. It was the dawn of a new era. There came over me a feeling of blessed calm and peace; an emotion of serious and thoughtful gladness. I tried not to let hate have a place in my heart, although I had abundant reason to give it full sway. I thought of the fifty thousand of America's best young manhood who lie buried in France. They died for us, and I was impressed as

never before with the sublime and touching truth expressed by the inscription carved on the stone that marks the grave of a British soldier over there:

"When you go home tell this of us and say,
For your tomorrow they gave their today."

And over there, as well as here, a tribute is being paid to the Grand Army of the Republic. The surviving heroes and the dead martyrs of the Rebellion of 1861-1865 are remembered beyond the Atlantic at the same time they are reverenced on this side of the ocean. For upon this thirtieth day of May, 1919, the day *you* assemble in memory of *your* fallen comrades, the soldiers of the American Expeditionary Army abroad are holding commemorative services over the graves of *their* comrades who fell at Cantigny, Chateau-Thierry, Meuse, Argonne, Belleau Wood and St. Mihiel, and who lie buried in that land.

The addresses to be made on this, your Memorial Day, as well as theirs,

will be delivered by the President of the United States and by General Pershing, the commander-in-chief of the American forces in the great world war just closed, who made such a glorious record in that titanic struggle. The forces under Pershing might well be described as the Grand Army of the Republic, and it is eminently fitting that your Memorial Day should be selected as the occasion for honoring its men of that army who sacrificed their lives that this Republic might endure.

We must not forget that the great world conflict which was brought to an end by the unconditional surrender November 11, 1918, was started by the people of Germany for purely selfish reasons. They believed that might could conquer right. They thought they could accomplish their unrighteous purposes by mere superiority in numbers and training. The result proves conclusively that brute force cannot win against right and a just cause. We must remember, ourselves, and we must impress upon all future generations, the truth that the Germans were wrong and the Allies and the United States

were right, and hence victory perched upon the banners of the armies that were fighting for honor and justice.

No duty is more essential at this time than that of impressing upon our people the absolute necessity of respect for law. The aphorism of King Solomon, written nearly three thousand years ago, is just as applicable to conditions existing now as it was in his day: "Where there is no vision, the people perish; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."

We made war against Germany to destroy all sentiment, propaganda and combinations in favor of the violation of established law. The same spirit that sent two million men overseas and had prepared two million more to follow them to fight for liberty under the law will dominate our people in peace. The greatest enemy to the Republic is the man who wilfully and purposely violates the law.

This nation has but one flag, and that is the standard that was adopted by the Continental Congress in Independence Hall on June 14, 1777. That emblem, from that day to this, has

stood for liberty—liberty to do what is right, not to do as you please. The very keystone of the arch that supports the Republic is respect for and obedience to law. Shatter that and the whole structure crumbles. No more timely admonition was ever spoken than that vigorous utterance of Theodore Roosevelt: "Unless this country is made a good place for all of us to live in, it won't be a good place for any of us to live in." The brave sons of America who went three thousand miles over the sea to uphold law and order will see to it on their return that the lawless element in this country is not permitted to disregard the rights of others on this side of the ocean.

We must now prepare for peace. Justice is what the worst malefactors fear most. It is "the dread of all who do wrong." A just peace we must have, and that includes and implies retribution for evil deeds.

Ill-considered pity and pardon encourage crime. The war just closed was a crime against humanity. The terms of peace must be such as will punish the criminal and make the per-

petration of similar wickedness forever impossible in the future. We want, not vengeance, but equal and exact justice to all. It is not our desire to preach the gospel of hate, strong as may be the provocation and incentive for doing so. But we must strenuously combat hysterical agitation that would endeavor by organized propaganda to convince our people that Germany was not accountable for the starting of the war.

America entered the war, not for the acquisition of territory, or from any selfish motive whatever. Our sole purpose was to make certain the enjoyment of liberty for the weak as well as the strong; not only for ourselves, but for the downtrodden and oppressed of all nations. But it must be understood that the liberty we fought for is liberty regulated by law, and that there is no man or group of men strong enough to defy the law successfully, and none so poor and humble as not to be entitled to its protection. We fought to establish the principle, eternally and immutably, that might can never prevail against right. No agreement between the parties to the strife just ended that does

not assert and ratify these principles is a just peace. I believe that the solemn compact, which is to be the last act in the greatest war in the world's history, will be of this character. I wish it could be signed, sealed and delivered in Berlin, so that hereafter we should see, not on manufactured goods, but endorsed on the treaty of peace, and nowhere else, the words, "Made in Germany."